From visions of sharing power
to building a culture of learning

Citizen participation in communication processes for development,
in Malmö, Sweden

Frida Leander
Abstract
The City of Malmö, Sweden’s third largest city, has high ambitions when it comes to inclusion and participation from local businesses and universities, NGOs and citizens. The decision to democratize management and to change the city’s processes towards working on (more) equal terms with relevant actors, was made by the City Council in 2014 as a step towards a socially sustainable development.

The City Planning Office of Malmö has the main responsibility for city developing projects. One of the city’s current developing projects is called Amiralsstaden, defined as a geographical area and a development process. The ambition of the project is to “through broad participation and co-creation, improve the city- and living environment and investigate how new housing and new businesses can be established” (malmo.se 2018: a) The project focuses on creating new ways of working with physical planning and to create new models for participation (Reflecting Paper 2018).

Since 2017, Amiralsstaden has facilitated two different participatory communication processes for development. Communication for Development scholar, Linje Manyozo (2012:222), argues that development communication no longer is a question of relevant technology or local contexts, nor a question of top-down or bottom-up approaches. Instead, he says, it is a question of how power figures in the political economy of both development and communication. A key indicator of whether media and communication for development interventions have played a critical role in society should therefore revolve around an understanding of how power has been negotiated and contested in favour of people.

With Amiralsstaden as case study, this thesis sets out to explore how the ambitions of participation on policy level translate into ‘real world’ city planning and what impact it has on development. More specifically, I want to know how citizen participation in communication processes for development is practiced, experienced and what these processes lead to in terms of results and outcome for the city and for the participants. The study is based on qualitative research methodologies, mainly in-depth interviews and observations. Concepts related to participation, such as power, voice, and representation, are in focus to analyse and understand participatory processes and how they contribute to city development.

Key words: citizen participation, communication for development, participatory communication, voice, power
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Introduction

Located in an old industrial complex, next to an adult educational association and a large parking lot, is the meeting place of Amiralsstaden. Soft greyish green tones on the walls, comfortable reading chairs, an exhibition shelf and a small kitchenette are framing the room.

Nine persons are sitting around the large table looking at the wall where PowerPoint slides are showing. One of them lives in the area and joined the first knowledge alliance of Amiralsstaden, an alliance with representatives from the City Planning Office, a researcher from Malmö University, and citizens living in the area. Their task was to furnish and decorate the room where we are sitting.

Two other citizens of Amiralsstaden are sitting at the table. They were part of the second knowledge alliance, called “Videos for active listening”. Last year they were hired for two months by the city to help tell the stories of everyday life in Amiralsstaden to the people in charge of the city planning processes.

The conversations around the table are led from behind by the two persons in charge of this meeting place in Amiralsstaden. They are contracted by the city as participation process designers. The slideshow on the wall is presented by a woman who is one of the initiators of the third knowledge alliance of Amiralsstaden. The topic is communication and the question in focus is: How do we, the citizens of Amiralsstaden and the staff at the City Planning Office, improve our ways of communicating with each other?

It is Wednesday at noon in early 2018. This is a Learning Lunch where the ideas of the knowledge alliance are openly discussed, twisted and turned.

As it will turn out later, five of the participants around the table will be my informants for this thesis.

Structure of the thesis

This thesis is divided into five chapters. In the first chapter I give a brief background with facts about the City of Malmö, its’ challenges and ambitions when it comes to developing the city. My overall research questions are also introduced in the first chapter along with a critical reflection of my own role, as being employed by the City of Malmö. In chapter two, I present the theoretical framework of the thesis as well as a literature review of relevant research, focusing on the field of Communication for Development and connected areas of research, such as questions of

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Knowledge alliances as a term was introduced in the City of Malmö by the Malmö Commission in 2013. It is a process defined to include informal and ‘unquantifiable’ knowledge alongside formal and quantifiable knowledge (Commission for a Socially Sustainable Malmö 2013: 128-130)
democracy and participation, power, representation and voice. Chapter three is a review of the methods and methodology I have used, and a brief presentation of my seven informants, while chapter four opens for the analysis of collected data in relation to the local context and theoretical framework described in earlier chapters. In chapter five I discuss what conclusions can be drawn from the analysis and reflect upon what would be interesting and rewarding to explore further.

1. Background and context

In this chapter, I will provide a background story of the City of Malmö, some of its’ features, challenges, and ambitions. The focus lies on the very clear message in city policies and local steering documents that participation and democratisation of municipal management are key components of sustainable development.

1.1 Malmö – aiming for sustainable development

Malmö is the third largest city in Sweden, a representative democracy which is still regarded a strong welfare state, though less so than in the past (Ginsburg and Rosenthal 2006). Municipalities (like the City of Malmö) have quite a big autonomy in relation to the state and municipal responsibilities range from i.e. education, culture, child- and elderly care and social work, to traffic- and infrastructure, environmental work and city planning.

With its’ about 330 000 inhabitants, Malmö is one of the fastest growing cities in the EU. There are more than 175 nationalities represented within the population (malmo.se 2018: b) and although it’s quite a small city geographically, it has the features of a big city, such as socio-economic segregation, which also reflects in economic and health inequalities. An analysis from the Commission for a Socially Sustainable Malmö, also called the Malmö Commission² shows a clear correlation between socio-economic and ethnic distribution in housing in Malmö: “Simply put, class and ethnicity increasingly coincide with residential area in Malmö.” (Commission for a Socially Sustainable Malmö 2013:71) Traveling from one city district to a neighbouring one can mean a difference of five years in life expectancy, explained by differences in the social determinants of health, such as employment, income, level of education, housing conditions etc (Commission for a Socially Sustainable Malmö 2013:5). On a strategic political level, participation

² Commission for a Socially Sustainable Malmö handed over its’ final report to the local council in Malmö in March 2013, with 72 recommendations on how to achieve a socially sustainable city with equity in health among its’ citizens.
and influence constitute the first (of eleven) national public health objective domain (Folkhalsomyndigheten.se 2018).

According to Manyozo (2012:154), community engagement is a key political discourse in the global north, in the running of local government and considered building blocks of sustainable development, which, as we will see, is mirrored in the local policies of participation in the City of Malmö.

The politically independent Malmö Commission was appointed by the City Council in 2011. Their main task was to propose strategies for reducing health inequalities and improve the long-term living conditions for the citizens of Malmö (malmo.se 2018: c). In its’ final report, the Malmö Commission advocated a change of processes to solve and prevent the problems of inequitable health and welfare. The commission recommended that these processes should not just be based on knowledge but also be centred on knowledge production and learning. The commissionaires argued that various stakeholders must be involved in these processes. “We regard it as desirable to increase citizens' influence and participation at all levels to increase the sense of participation and as an extension of this, experience increased control over one's own life. Some of this obviously applies to democracy and governance but our proposal is considerably more extensive. Figuratively speaking, it does not only concern City Hall and politics but the municipal processes in general” (Commission for a Socially Sustainable Malmö 2013:128). In 2014 the City Council of Malmö voted to adopt the overarching recommendation to “change processes by creating knowledge alliances and democratised management”, and to implement this in the entire organisation, across the whole city (malmo.se 2018: c). Knowledge alliances are understood as process defined to include informal and ‘unquantifiable’ knowledge alongside formal and quantifiable knowledge (Commission for a Socially Sustainable Malmö 2013: 128-130)

In 2015 Malmö signed A declaration of Cities Commitment to the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda which means that Malmö commits to contributing to the global agenda, and to work towards reaching the Social Development Goals (SDGs) on the local level. Participation is a key component of the SDGs. For example, SDG 11, Sustainable cities and communities, aims to “make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable” which demands cooperation between sectors and management on several levels at the same time, including developed forms for dialogue with citizens and the business sector. (The Global Goals 2018)
In addition, the city budget of Malmö 2018 emphasizes participation: “The citizens of Malmö shall feel proud of their young, global and modern city where questions of equality, gender equality, anti-discrimination, environment and participation is high up on the agenda.” (malmo.se 2018: d)

### 1.2 Amiralsstaden

One of the 72 measures recommended by the Malmö Commission in its final report from 2013, was to invest in two major city improvement projects. Amiralsstaden is one of those two:

“The planned physical interventions should be health-promoting, bridge barriers, improve access, increase safety and trust, increase participation, increase attraction and become a tool for local mobilisation and the creation of local jobs” (Commission for a Socially Sustainable Malmö 2013:73)

Amiralsstaden as a project in its’ current form started in late 2016. The fact that change is made through participation and collaboration is highlighted in descriptions of the project. The value of citizens’ and other actors’ experiences is stressed: “Amiralsstaden will, through broad participation and co-creation, improve the city- and living environment and investigate how new housing and new businesses can be established. Housing and businesses are important parts of the development, but it is the complete living environment that is the most important task for Amiralsstaden” (malmo.se 2018: a) As a development process, Amiralsstaden focuses on creating new ways of working with physical planning and to create new models for participation (Reflecting Paper 2018).

The local meeting place/office opened in the spring of 2017 and the two participatory process designers were contracted in that summer. In the heart of the geographic area of Amiralsstaden is the housing area of Rosengård, often described as a problematic suburb and known for its multicultural community, high unemployment rates and social problems (Listerborn 2008:66). On the official webpage, the project is described as “an umbrella term for the city development processes and projects, starting from the upcoming Station Rosengård, which will be finished in December 2018”. The new train station will connect the city district of Rosengård better to the rest of the city. (malmo.se. 2018: e)
The Amiralsstaden project is part of Malmö Innovation Arena, which is financed by the City of Malmö, the European Regional Development Fund and Vinnova\(^3\) (malmo.se 2018: a). Funding is ensured until the end of 2019. The overall objectives for the project are connected to social sustainability, such as contributing to increased levels of economic self-support and increased health equality among the residents of Malmö, and “a sustainable everyday life” (Bescher, S. Personal communication 7 May 2018)

There are six people working part-time in the core team of Amiralsstaden project, a project manager and a planner employed by the city, a communications officer, two participatory process designers, hired as consultants for a limited time, and one citizen employed by the hour.

One of the methods of working in the process is arranging knowledge alliances. For Amiralsstaden, the term knowledge alliance is a way to conceptualise the participatory process. The idea is to generate new knowledge by having a 360 degrees involvement, from politicians, local businesses, civil servants working in the city administration and from civil society and the individuals living in the area. “And the point is for this knowledge not to just become something you put on a wall, it will be tested against the existing organisation to see if it is a method we can use in the everyday municipal practices”, says the Project Manager of Amiralsstaden. Another part of the developing process in Amiralsstaden is Learning Lunches, where citizens and city employees, as well as students, researchers and people from other projects are invited, with the aim of mutual inspiration. (malmo.se 2018: f)

1.3 Two communication focused knowledge alliances

Since 2017 there have been two different knowledge alliances focusing on communication in Amiralsstaden. They are described as “pilots”, a way of testing methods of participation on a small scale with the aim to reproduce and scale them up at a later stage, and at the same time get results that can be used in the development of the area (Participatory Process Designer).

1.3.1 Videos for Active Listening

The first communication knowledge alliance was made in late 2017. It is called “Videos for Active Listening” and has the aim to “with a personal touch, introduce the needs and stories of the citizens, to the City of Malmö, and thereby enable active listening.” (malmo.se 2018: g)

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\(^3\) Sweden’s Innovation Agency, a public authority with a vision to strengthen Sweden as a country of research and innovation. The mission is to contribute to sustainable growth by improving the conditions for innovation. [https://www.vinnova.se/en/about-us/swedens-innovation-agency/the-role-of-vinnova/](https://www.vinnova.se/en/about-us/swedens-innovation-agency/the-role-of-vinnova/)
The project was led by two freelancing citizens, a professional filmmaker and a writer, married to each other and living in Amiralsstaden. The initiative came from the Amiralsstaden staff, but after handing over the mission, the staff took a step back. The video production couple were commissioned for two months, given a budget and an open task to question the City of Malmö when it comes to the development of Amiralsstaden.

Five videos were finished with five different citizens telling the story of their everyday life in the area. The common question to all of them was how the new train station in Rosengård would affect their lives, what they hoped and wished for from the city administration and what they would like to question.

Since being published on the official webpage of Amiralsstaden, the videos have been screened and discussed at strategic meetings at the City Planning Office, at a local council meeting, in the common exhibition area at City Hall and at Learning Lunches in the Amiralsstaden meeting place.

1.3.2 Communication for Citizen Participation

In early 2018, a team consisting of volunteering service designers, a researcher from Malmö university, and citizens started to investigate communications- and participatory processes in Amiralsstaden in order to improve communication between the City Planning Office and the citizens of Amiralsstaden. The aim is formulated as “finding and creating new ways of conducting citizens dialogue, but maybe also rediscover traditional forms and places for dialogue” (Bader, Wennberg and Tayfour 2018).

During the process six citizens have met six city planners on one-to-one meetings, preparing for a common workshop which was held in late April 2018. In the workshop, the participants elaborated on different ideas of how to improve the communication between the city and the citizens. Some of the suggestions that came up were exhibitions, thematic parties, a new kind of map based on local experience, language cafés, and a digital platform.

A report from the workshop is to be finished in June 2018 and handed over to Amiralsstaden and the City Planning Office and thereby contribute to the Amiralsstaden Communications Strategy.
1.4 Research questions

With Amiralsstaden as a case study, I want to explore how the high ambitions of participation on policy level translates into ‘real world’ city planning and development processes, with a focus on citizen participation in communication processes.

Currently, I am working within the city administration as a sustainability strategist. Before my current position, I used to work as a Communications Officer in the City for almost ten years, although in no direct way connected to Amiralsstaden. However, I understand that my prior knowledge, understandings, and opinions about how the city understands and practices participation has positive and negative implications, which I will discuss further in Chapter 3. There is a risk of being biased. There is also a power relationship between me and the city to be acknowledged, as the City pays my salary. On the other hand, my experience has given me a deeper knowledge and understanding of the local context and access to informants and information that may otherwise have been more difficult. Furthermore, while doing this research I have been inspired by a research approach designed for people working with developing their organisations. It means that one ambition when doing this research is to provide input to the ongoing development processes in the organisation or project under study, of which I am part. This approach demands a high level of self-reflexivity, all the time acknowledging the issue of me, the researcher, being involved in the project. I wish to see this research as part of an iterative learning process and hope the discussions coming out of it can be useful in the self-reflective process Amiralsstaden sets out to be.

The research questions are:

- Why and how is citizen participation practiced in communication processes within the city development processes within Amiralsstaden?
- Who gains from the process and in what way, and how do participants experience it?
- What do the participatory processes lead to, what are the visible results or intangible outcome? Is the city willing to listen, and act on the result?

1.4.1 Limitations

Regarding the Video for Active Listening project, it was already finished when I started the study, which means I haven’t been able to do observations or participate in the actual process. However, the fact that some time has passed since the videos were finished also means that the informants have been able to reflect on the outcome and impact of the project in retrospect.
As for the second project, Communication for Citizen Participation, it has been the other way around. I have participated in, and done observations of the actual process. But, since the end product (the report) from this project isn’t finished until June, possible impact of the product on municipality processes will not be part of this thesis, nor will the citizens’ views on how it is translated from words to practice.

2. Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

In this chapter, I will go through relevant literature and present the overall theoretical framework used for analysing the data and answer the research questions. The theories revolve around aspects and concepts within the overarching field of Communication for Development, such as democracy, participation, power, representation and voice. I will then use these concepts to analyse the data, and to explore to what degree the participatory communication processes of Amiralsstaden, means having negotiated or shared power with the citizens.

2.1 Communication for Development and Social Change

The overall conceptual framework of this thesis is Communication for Development, and specifically the participatory communication approach, described by Communication for Development scholar Linje Manyozo (2012). Communication for development and social change, according to Enghel (2013:119), “refers to intentional and strategically organized processes of face-to-face and/or mediated communication aimed at promoting dialogue and action to address inequality, injustice, and insecurity for the common good.”

Malmö’s vision when it comes to social challenges such as “inequality, injustice and insecurity” is articulated in the comprehensive plan, a long-term vision for development of the city, which is the City Planning Office’s principal steering document: “Social divides are to be healed and the city united – barriers are to be broken and inequalities are to be reduced through considered social investment. In the same way that we invest in the physical infrastructure, we must invest in Malmö’s human capital.” (malmo.se 2014:1)

In the same comprehensive plan, under the ‘special priority’ section called The city as a venue for culture and democracy, participation is mentioned as a means to develop the city: “The city is also socially strengthened by public participation and it is essential that steps are taken to increase participation in the planning processes” (malmo.se 2014:2)

Development, according to Communication for Development scholars, entails participatory social-economic and political change processes, in which citizens and societies are challenged and
empowered to assume greater control over their lives, environment and destiny. And, at the
centre of engaging communities in grass-roots development is the question of communication at
the community level. (Manyozo 2012:154).

2.2 Participatory communication and communicative planning

Theories of communication for development have since the 1960s gone from top-down, expert-
driven diffusion models to more bottom-up, participatory models. Participatory communication
could be seen a major strategy towards community and stakeholder engagement that is based on
dialogue, respect for local knowledge and collective decision-making (Manyozo 2012:155).

According to Tufte (2017:13), participatory communication approaches, rather than being about
communicating the correct or relevant information to specific target groups, “becomes about
articulating specific processes of collective action and reflection”. The central focus is on the
empowerment of citizens through their active involvement in the identification of problems, the
development of solution strategies and their implementation. (ibid) As opposed to diffusion
models within communication for development, which see the problem as lack of information
and knowledge and the solution as clear and targeted messages, participatory models aim for
collective action and social mobilisation to solve the problem of unequal societal structures and
power relations (Scott 2014:57).

In a similar fashion, there has also been a communicative turn in planning theory, starting in the
1970’s. This shift has gone from a top-down approach towards collaborative and communicative
planning, with an increased expectation on planners to pay attention to the voices of citizens.
Healey (1997:28-30) says public policy and planning these days, are social processes “through
which ways of thinking, ways of valuing and ways of acting are actively constructed by
participants”. In short, Healey (ibid) proposes that it involves, among other criteria, a recognition
that all forms of knowledge are socially constructed and that the development and
communication of knowledge and reasoning take many different forms, from rational systematic
analysis to storytelling and expressive statements.

Swedish planning authorities are now trying to implement the ideals of participatory or
deliberative democracy, inspired by the communicative turn, following the idea of “planning as a
democratic enterprise aimed at promoting social justice and environmental sustainability”
(Listerborn 2008: 64).

The City Planning Director of Malmö recognizes the turn towards a more communicative city
planning. Currently, a professional participation- and dialogue team is being set up in the City
Planning Office. “Questions of communication have become more and more important, but they have also changed character. It’s not only about spreading information, as you did before, but it is about actually getting a conversation going. And for that conversation to be real. Because the citizens themselves are also more interested and more active in these processes. It’s not enough for them to be informed, they want to be part of the process. So, the entire way of working with communication needs to change. That’s why we are putting up a dialogue team in our office now. Because this is so important.” (City Planning Director).

And the will to have a conversation goes both ways. Tufte (2017:173) says that “while many institutions in society speak on behalf of and to citizens, the expressed desire of many citizens is to have their own say in such conversations. Rather than being represented, they want to participate.” And the City Planning Director of Malmö has the same view: “What has struck me a bit is how interested the citizens of Malmö are to join, they are very interested in their city…When we communicated the comprehensive plan 40,000 inhabitants of Malmö participated in some way.” (City Planning Director)

When analysing the case of Amiralsstaden, I will take Manyozo’s (2012) Participatory Communication Approach, as a starting point. It is one of three different approaches within the field of communication for development, as identified by Manyozo. Within this approach, the focus lies on the process of communication, as opposed to the other two approaches (the Media for Development Approach with an emphasis on content and The Media Development Approach with an emphasis on structure). The objective of employing participation as a means and an end is to enable effective grassroots-led research “to allow communities to set the agenda, increase and equalise social capital⁴ levels, strengthen the efficiency of development project delivery and to increase levels of community investment and self-efficacy” (ibid:155).

There are two conceptualisations of participation in Communication for Development; the pragmatic view, and the Marxist perspective. Pragmatists look at participation as an education and research strategy for including constituent and stakeholder needs and interests within a

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⁴ Social capital is defined by Putnam (2001:19) as “connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them.” According to Putnam, social capital is a key component to building and maintaining democracy.
proposed project or development initiative. To Marxists, participation is a form of class struggle for social justice, a process in which power redistribution is the fundamental goal. (ibid:157)

As with most perceived dichotomies, there is no singular normative of participation within the practice and theory of participatory communication. Rather, communication as participation explains a holistic, collective and dialogical process that brings together relevant stakeholders, engaging them in critical deliberative dialogues about a development problem (Manyozo 2012:157). To understand what motivates the City of Malmö to use citizen participation to develop the city, it is still interesting to look at two theoretical approaches to community engagement, that connects with the pragmatic and Marxist perspectives. These are called the systems approach and the empowerment approach (ibid:165-166). The empowerment approach allows communities to achieve greater control of agenda-setting and decision-making. It sees participation as a struggle for social justice and redistribution of power. Key factors are personal development, consciousness raising, and social action. In contrast, the systems approach refers to externally driven engagement in which participation is an administrative apparatus and has been employed to legitimise unpopular decisions, allowing organisations to achieve pragmatic objectives. The systems approach as community governance has been largely employed as a strategy in Western liberal democracies, according to Manyozo (2012:166-167). The approach is seen as an “ideal strategy for educating communities about government functions and systems”. It aims at addressing concerns with low levels of trust and confidence in government, increased social inclusion and the inability of government to solve all challenges (ibid). In such approaches, institutional power structures employ consultation and public participation strategies to obtain grass-roots perspectives, needs or responses to proposals.

Bessette (2004:36) proposes ten steps for implementing participatory development communication. In short, they are about establishing relationships with local communities and understanding local settings; involving the community in identifying development questions and concrete initiatives; identifying relevant stakeholders; building partnerships; collaboratively developing, pre-testing, self-managing, implementing and evaluating initiatives; and importantly, sharing and utilisation of results. Furthermore, Bessette (ibid:26) underlines that researchers and development practitioners, as well as community members and other stakeholders who are involved in the process should also be engaged in continuous monitoring and evaluation. “This is a continual cycle of action and reflection, through which everyone learns and improves upon their efforts.”
In this process, the role of the facilitator is underlined. The facilitator of a process must perceive the communities not as beneficiaries but as stakeholders and be ready to develop partnerships and synergy with other development actors working with the same communities. “One must learn to listen to people, to help them express their views and to assist in building consensus for action.” (ibid 2004:10). The communicative facilitator ideally understands the praxis of living with the people if they are to effectively help communities to *speak and unspeak their world*, as expressed by the Brasilian pedagogue Paulo Freire, whose work on liberating education has had a big influence on the participatory turn within development communication (Waisbord 2001:18-20).

### 2.2.1 Critique against participatory communication

Participatory development communication grew out of a critique of the information diffusion paradigm within development communication. But participatory communication is not unproblematic, and as it is with dominant practices, it shouldn’t be looked at as “the only way”. Waisbord (2010:21-23) gives an overview of the critique against the participatory models, where some of the most significant features are that they are slow and inefficient in the sense that impact is hard to measure. These shortcomings are particularly pronounced when funds for development communication are short-term and funding agencies are interested in obtaining cost-effective results. To these criticisms, advocates of participatory models suggest that development communication requires a long-term perspective. This perspective is usually missing among funding agencies and governments, who are interested in getting quick results and to know the value of their efforts. The problem of not showing results does not originate from the participatory model, they say, but in how organisations approach development communication. “Neither community development nor empowerment fit the timetables of traditional programs.” (ibid:23) On the other hand, Scott (2014) wonders if everyone always need to be involved in all aspects of development, or if it might lead to what Bordenave (1994:46) calls the “banalization” of participation, or to big inefficiencies in the process.

### 2.3 Democracy and participation

Active citizens are seen as beneficial for the development of democratic societies and the concept of participation is an essential part of most democratic theories (Gustafsson 2013:27). For example, in Robert Dahl's (1989) famous theory of democracy, participation constitutes one of the cornerstones for the pluralistic democratic ideal. Thus, participation is closely linked to a normative understanding of democracy.
Reaching a deeper democracy is viewed as a solution to what, according to Tufte (2017:66), is one of the most severe development challenges of our times: the discrepancies between the needs and aspirations of citizens and the ability of governments and systems to govern in sync with these demands. The Canadian political sociologist John Gaventa (2011:253) argues that there is a growing gap within both North and South “between ordinary people, especially the poor, and the institutions which affect their lives, especially government”. Much like the Malmö Commission, he argues that it is by deepening democracy and democratic participation by citizens, but also through the governments’ attempts to seek new forms of expression, that sustainable methods of participatory governance will be developed (Gaventa 2011:255).

But citizen participation and empowerment as a governing strategy to activate citizens and thus reach ‘deeper democracy’ is not undebated. As society has changed, so has the way individuals are governed and there has been a shift from societal governing to self-governing. It has gone from being state centred with a focus on collective responsibility for the welfare of the citizens and societal development in general to a growing focus on decentralisation and market inspired solutions, where traits like autonomy and individual responsibility are celebrated (Dahlstedt 2006: 85) Thus, when society calls for self-governing subjects as a solution to segregation (ibid) or to fight poverty through technologies of empowerment (Cruikshank 1999) it could also be seen as handing over a larger responsibility for societal development in general, on the individual.

**2.4 Measuring participation and impact**

Although highly relevant, in this study I will look beyond the critique of the neo-liberal political participation discourse, and focus on the actual practice of participation (from a critical perspective). How can you tell that you’re making a difference if it really is participation, and not just ticking a participation-box in your report?
As mentioned above, one critique against participatory communication has been that its’ impact is hard to measure, whereas demands on visible results have been strongly connected to funding and legitimization of communicative interventions. Tufte (2017:19) also problematises this hunt for predefined goals related to ambitions of information transfer. Because, he says, what is left aside is the more open-ended processes of social change, such as empowerment and citizen engagement.

A classic text on participation is written by Sherry Arnstein in 1969 and called ‘A Ladder of Citizen Participation’. For Arnstein, “citizen participation is a categorical term for citizen power which allows citizens otherwise excluded from political and economic processes to be included. It is the strategy by which the have-nots join in determining how information is shared, goals and policies are set, tax resources are allocated, programs are operated, and benefits like contracts and patronage are parcelled out.” (Arnstein 1969:216).

The ladder of participation has eight rungs, each rung corresponding to the extent of citizens’ power in determining the plan and/or program (see figure 1). The rungs are divided into three parts; Nonparticipation, Tokenism and Citizen Power.

Although useful as an illustration of different levels of participation, the ladder model with its’ distinguished categories, is not always an ideal way of looking at participatory processes in a complex society. Among others, Communications scholar Nico Carpentier (2016:70-88) argues that we need to go beyond the ladder of participation since these approaches tend to see participation as the stable outcome of a process, not as a process in itself. This is interesting when thinking of the distinction between communication as a process and as a product. Power can be shared or redistributed within the participatory communication process, without the product of the process having any influence in decision-making.

The ladder approach also ignores the fact that different actors might have different perspectives and interests, which generates a much more dynamical and contingent (or unstable) process than the ladder-based approaches seem to suggest. Also, says Carpentier (ibid), the notion of power...
“becomes frequently black-boxed or under-theorised in ladder-based approaches, despite their focus on power.”

This tells us, among other things, that power is more than making an effective political decision at a certain moment. As we will see, several of my informants look at power and power sharing as something more complex than making a formal decision.

Within Communication for Development studies, the various “gradations” of participation find a theoretical common ground within three fundamentals: participation implies minimal or total liberation from oppressive power relations; it implies access to decision-making processes; and it implies communicative relationships (Manyozo 2012:157).

Hence, however difficult to define, the concept of power is central when determining whether or not actual participation has taken place. Manyozo (2012:222) argues that development communication is no longer a question of relevant technology or local contexts, nor a question of top-down or bottom-up approaches. Instead, it is a question of how power figures in the political economy of both development and communication. A key indicator of whether media and communication for development interventions have played a critical role in society should, therefore, revolve around an understanding of how power has been negotiated and contested in favour of people (ibid).

In the Analysis chapter, I will look closer at how Amiralsstaden looks at power in connection to participatory processes.

### 2.5 Voice and representation

When analysing participatory communication for development, the concept of voice is relevant. Nick Couldry (2010) concludes in his book *Why Voice Matters* (2010) that the offer of effective voice is crucial to the legitimacy of modern democracies.

Voice, as a concept is, according to Couldry (2010:1), “the capacity of human beings to give an account of themselves and of their place in the world”. Treating people as if they lack that capacity is to treat them as if they were not human. Voice is one word for that capacity, but having a voice is never enough, says Couldry. I need to know that my voice matters. “Yet, we have grown used do ways of organizing things that ignore voice, that assume voice does not matter” (ibid).

When connecting voice with city planning, a good starting-point in a democratic society is the idea that planning is “managing our co-existence in shared space” (Healey 1997:3). And if public
spaces are to be shared, the environment needs to be permissive and different voices need to be heard (Fincher and Jacobs 1998:220).

Listerborn (2008:61) points out, that within the new participatory approach of planning is a growing post-colonial and feminist critique addressing that not all voices are being heard (see i.e. Spivak 1996). Listerborn (2008:61) argues that participatory planning in marginalised housing areas demands a great sensibility to citizens’ everyday life worlds, as well as a more reflexive planner role and the use of methods based on oral traditions and listening rather than traditional planning.

Tufte (2017:167) too, is worried about the representation of voices within the field of Communication for Development and Social Change. He calls it a “crisis of representation” of the ordinary citizen, and the marginalized citizen in particular. “It manifests itself as a communicative disconnect and imbalance between the voices, aspirations, and hopes of groups of citizens that feel marginalized and unrepresented, on the one side, and the de facto communicative interventions of governments, agencies and civil society, on the other.” (ibid)

To better understand which groups of citizens Tufte is referring to, a brief review of research in the field shows that socioeconomic status long has been known to predict political participation, as have also other types of more general background factors, such as age, gender, ethnicity and family background (Gustafsson 2013:32). According to Myrberg (2011 in Gustafsson 2013:32), immigrants participate in politics to a lesser degree than native citizens. “This is due to a lack of social integration and on average a lack of resources and skills (lower income, language difficulties, lacking political knowledge, etc.).” (ibid)

2.6 Summary conceptual framework

In this short section, I will explain how I understand the main concepts, how they connect and how they are operationalised in the analysis.

Participation in this study is understood as the equalisation of power relations between privileged (the City) and non-privileged (citizens, and especially marginalized groups) actors in formal or informal decision-making processes (i.e. Carpentier 2016:70-88, Manyozo 2012:222).

I will use Manyozo’s distinction between systems and empowerment approach to participation (2012:165-178), to analyse how the City of Malmö and participating citizens understand and experience the ongoing participatory processes and how they look at equalisation of power. By
asking what motivates the City to arrange participatory processes and the citizens why they
decided to join, I have been looking for signifiers of the two approaches.

*Power* in participatory processes is a key factor on many levels. In this study I see power as the
possibility for (citizen) participants to influence formal or informal decisions; as defining what
questions and issues that are to be discussed or negotiated; as in awareness and recognition of
existing power dynamics and attached practices; and as in the power to select who gets to
participate. In my interviews, the definition of power has been open and it has been up to the
informants to interpret and describe how they look at power in relation to the participatory
processes of Amiralsstaden. Aware of its’ flaws, I will use Arnstein’s (1969) ladder of
participation to analyse how power is distributed in the processes in Amiralsstaden.

*Voice and Representation* are two concepts closely connected to power and equalisation of power
relations. Making sure there is representation from non-privileged or marginalized groups in
participatory processes is a way to legitimize the process. Another way of valuing voice is by
active listening and recognizing that you have been listening. Mainly using Couldry’s (2010)
theory of voice as a capacity for a human being to tell her story, I will analyse if and how the City
of Malmö values voice and ensures fair representation.

*Impact and outcome* are, naturally, of great interest. As the main critique of the participatory
communication approach is that it is slow and inefficient and that impact is hard to measure, it
has been important to find out how the informants discuss goals, results, outcome, and impact of
participatory processes. Based on the problematisation of result-based development (Waisbord
2012, Tufte 2017), I want to find out how a long-term city developing project view the need for
visible results, and how they handle the difficulties of measuring impact.

*Learning-based participation* is something that Basset says is “a continual cycle of action and
reflection, through which everyone learns and improves upon their efforts.” This kind of learning
as part of the process, the building of a learning organisation, is considered when analysing the
informants view on the process and outcome of participation in Amiralsstaden.

### 3. Methodology

The methods I have used are all qualitative. The main reason for choosing qualitative methods is
that I want to understand the process, power structures, participants experiences of the process
and their actual sense of participation. As concluded by Sofaer (1999): *Qualitative research methods*
are valuable in providing rich descriptions of complex phenomena; tracking unique or unexpected events; illuminating the experience and interpretation of events by actors with widely differing stakes and roles; giving voice to those whose views are rarely heard; conducting initial explorations to develop theories and to generate and even test hypotheses; and moving toward explanations.

Qualitative methods are also especially effective when the aim is directed at providing an in-depth understanding of the social world of the research participants by learning about the sense they make of their social and material circumstances, experiences, perspectives and histories (Ritchie 2013:4)

3.1 Case study
By looking at Amiralsstaden as a case, I am able to look in-depth at the phenomenon of participatory communication for development. Case studies often are concerned with pinning down the specific mechanisms and pathways between causes and effects rather than revealing the average strength of a factor that causes an effect. Case studies also have a strong comparative advantage with respect to the “depth” of the analysis, where depth can be understood as empirical completeness and natural wholeness or as conceptual richness and theoretical consistency. (Blatter 2008:3)

3.2 Observations
As an exploratory approach, observations seek to uncover unanticipated phenomena (McKechnie 2008). While the interview is a situation where you consciously can leave out or add words to fit what you would like the answer to be, that kind of manipulation is harder when it comes to observation, though it can never be ruled out.

The rich description generated by observational research can result in a deeper, fuller understanding of the phenomena. How is participation practiced? What happens in the room/the location? Who talks and who doesn’t? Does it confirm what the participants say in the interviews, or not?

Within ethnography, observation is a key method, where the ethnographer participates in the society or culture being studied, looking for patterns, describes local relationships, understandings and meanings (Tacchi, Slater and Hearn 2003:9). Having an ethnographic approach in this study means to make sense of the social relationships and processes within which the project is doing its work. My observations include three occasions of attending Learning Lunches and planning meetings with the project group of the Communication for Citizen Participation project and one
bigger workshop with participants from the City Planning Office and citizens from Amiralsstaden. When writing the thesis, I have used the observations mainly as support for the analysis.

3.3 In-depth Interviews

The fact that an in-depth interview is a combination of structure and “freedom” makes the approach suitable for the kind of information I want to get, which is both a description of the process of participation and the personal experience of being a participant. When doing in-depth interviews, or semi-structured interviews, “the researcher retains some control over the direction and content to be discussed, but participants are free to elaborate or take the interview in new but related directions” (Cook 2008:2). Interviews like this, between rigid structure and complete uncertainty, provide in-depth information on the topic, without predetermining the results.

3.3.1 Selection of informants

All in all, I have conducted seven in-depth interviews, including two that were made on the same occasion (Video Citizen 1 and 2). My aim has been to get a good balance between informants from the City and citizens. The city employees are chosen based on the level of responsibility and accountability in connection to the Amiralsstaden project, whereas the citizen participants are chosen both by recommendation from the Amiralsstaden staff and by me after attending a workshop, where Citizen Participant (see below) took part.

Some of the interviews are made in Swedish and some in English. Before starting the interviews, I made it clear that it is not possible for the city employees to be completely anonymised, which they have agreed to.

Here is a brief introduction to the informants:

- **City Planning Director** in the City of Malmö, head of the City Planning Office, which is where the project Amiralsstaden is situated in the city organisation. Was a commissionaire on the Commission for a Socially Sustainable Malmö and the initiator of the Amiralsstaden project. Currently Chair of the steering group of Amiralsstaden.

- **Project Manager** of the Amiralsstaden project, employed by the City Planning Office at the Strategic Department. Responsible for the overall project delivery.

- **Participation Process Designer** Amiralsstaden. Hired by the City Planning Office as a consultant together with a partner, part-time. The Participation Process Designers are both hired for a limited set of time to design participatory processes in Amiralsstaden, try
out methods and build networks and relationships within the area. Included in the “Amiralsstaden management” in this thesis, although they are consultants and part of their job is to “question” the City of Malmö. Both designers are architects and have been working with urban development through community engagement in the Global South for the bigger part of their careers.

- **Employed Citizen Participant.** Has a background in interior- and architectural design. Came to Sweden two and a half years ago, as a refugee from Syria. Is employed by the hour since 2017 by the Amiralsstaden project. Used to live in Amiralsstaden, but recently moved to neighbouring area. Has been a participant in both the “Video for Active Listening” and the “Communication for Citizen Participation” knowledge alliances.

- **Citizen participant** in the “Communication for Citizen Participation” knowledge alliance. Came to Sweden from Syria four and a half years ago. Used to work for the UN and the Red Cross in Syria. Now works with labour market activities within the City of Malmö.

- **Video Citizen 1**, producing videos in the “Video for Active Listening” knowledge alliance. Filmmaker from Taiwan. Married to Video Citizen 2. Moved to Sweden and Malmö two years ago.

- **Video Citizen 2**, producing videos in the “Video for Active Listening” knowledge alliance. Freelancing writer and translator, brought up in the UK. Married to Video Citizen 1 and moved with him to Sweden two years ago.

It would have been interesting to add the communication profession in this selection of informants. In the City, the communication workers’ task is often seen as supporting projects from the side, more than being an active member of the project management. This fact is not uncontroversial and has come up as an issue in several interviews, but is not included in this thesis. It would have added another important dimension to the study, but I chose not to include it due to word- and time limit.

### 3.4 Contributing to organisational learning

Although not completely applicable to this thesis, I have been inspired by the ethnographic action research approach (EARA), which was developed by UNESCO for the research and development of ICT projects. The approach combines two research approaches: ethnography and action research. Ethnography has traditionally been used to understand different cultures,
whereas action research is used, not only to understand an issue or problem but also to provoke a change of some kind (Tacchi, Slater and Hearn 2003:1).

Much like my ambition is to contribute to the development of participatory communication processes in Malmö, the EARA is concerned with how a project develops a research culture.

My ambition has been to contribute to a constant feedback of knowledge and reflection that helps the projects develop. But, due to limited time and possibility, I haven’t been able to participate in the participatory processes as a full-worthy member. In that sense, my participation hasn’t been ‘true’ action research. More importantly, the analysis and conclusions of this thesis are to a significant extent based on the in-depth interviews and observations, and not on my active participation in the process. However, as part of having an action-inspired approach, I have been a formal member of the Communication for Citizen Participation project group and participated in several project meetings and workshops. I have given feedback on proposed strategies within the project and have had a number of one-on-one meetings with the management of Amiralsstaden, discussing literature, my research and feeding back my thoughts into Amiralsstaden.

According to Lennie and Tacchi (2013:23), one key component of evaluating Communication for Development projects is for the evaluation to be learning-based. This component aims to “facilitate and encourage continuous learning, mutual understanding, empowerment, creative ideas and thinking, and responsiveness to new ideas and different attitudes, values, and knowledge” (ibid). One additional way for me to contribute to organisational learning has been by arranging a Learning Lunch at the local office, inviting participants from the knowledge alliance, the City Planning Office, the City Communication Offices and others, to discuss my questions and findings so far. Another Learning Lunch is planned in September 2018, where the findings of this thesis will be discussed. So far, I have also been invited to similar events by the central Communications Office in the City, and to an umbrella organisation for non-governmental associations in Malmö.

3.4.1 My role

As mentioned in the background chapter, the choice to have the EARA as an inspiration, with its’ focus on constant self-reflexivity, learning and evaluation, goes hand in hand with me as a professional “sustainability strategist” in the City of Malmö, being indirectly involved in the process (although without mandate to govern or manage the project and processes in Amiralsstaden).
I understand that my background as working at communication departments of the city for ten years, including two years for the Malmö Commission, has its’ pros and cons when doing this study. The pros include knowledge, trust, and relationships which gives me an “easy way in” to the key functions and people within the city administration. It also includes an understanding of the complex structures and power dynamics that an outsider can’t see the same way.

The cons include a potential bias which could make it hard for me to keep a neutral position as a researcher. Another potential problem could be a ‘blindness’ to underlying problems within the rigid structures and routines of the City. With regards to power dynamics, it may also be that the informants from the City view me in the light of my position in the central sustainability office, and try to influence me as if I had the power to decide on sustainability projects within the city.

To avoid any misunderstanding, I have been very open with my role in every conversation and every introduction of my research project along the way. I have also been clear about the overall ambition to give back knowledge and, best case scenario, to contribute to the processes of participation in communication practices in the City of Malmö.

3.5 Reflection on chosen methodology

By using qualitative methods and a small selection of informants it won’t be possible to draw general conclusions, as would have been the case with a more quantitative approach. Discussions and conclusions of this thesis should, therefore, be seen more as enlightening examples, stories and voices from people at the heart of city development processes, which in the light of communication for development theory, hopefully, can spark a discussion and inspire to self-reflexivity.

4. Analysis

In this chapter, I will analyse and explore the data from my observations and interviews in the light of the research questions and theories. Based on the theoretical framework, I have chosen to sort the findings in four categories, as follows. Even though Power is a separate category, the concept of power permeates all four categories. There is a short summary at the end of each section.

- Participation Approach
- Power
Before starting the analysis, there is an issue that has been following me from the start, which has become more obvious when analysing the interviews. It is connected to the challenges of combining a city planning discourse and a media- and communications discourse, especially in the light of the shift within the City Planning Office, from information dissemination to participatory processes. At times, it has been impossible to separate the concepts of participation and communication.

Even when participation as a method is used in other city development processes, that has nothing to do with communication as an outcome, communication is still at heart of the process. This dependency has made it complicated, both for the informants and myself, to separate participatory development processes and participatory communication processes.

But, my definition of communication is broad. I understand communication processes to be part of participatory processes on many (if not all) levels, which makes a separation of the two concepts less important. To paraphrase Manyozo (2012:157): “Communication as participation, therefore, explains a holistic, collective and dialogical process that brings together relevant stakeholders, engaging them in critical deliberative dialogues about a development problem”.

4.1 Participation Approach

The management of the City expresses the need to find new ways of working or to think and act in a new way. Clearly, the City Planning Director wants a change, not only regarding how the City works with citizen participation but also in the mindset of those working in planning and development of the city: “We have no choice but to work with participation. If you understand a place and what is needed in that place you are paving the way for success. But there is so much left to do in this field, so much. We have to reset our brains. And it’s fun. Paradigm shift is a worn-out and boring expression, but I think that is what it is. It is about how we look at things. I find myself expressing myself the same way I have always done, and it’s wrong... Malmö looks different today than it used to. If you really are to take advantage of the global competence as we say we should, well then, we must listen. Because there are things that we don’t understand... There is a knowledge there, that we need to grasp” (City Planning Director)
This desired change and self-awareness of the City Planning Director is connected to trends like migration and urbanisation, which is changing the city, especially in terms of its’ population. It also relates to the communicative turn within city planning and what Healy (1997:30) refers to as a need “to transform ways of organising and ways of knowing in significant ways”.

4.1.1 Pragmatic or empowering approach to community engagement?

Departing from this urge for new ways of working, I have been curious about what it is that makes the participating citizens join city development processes, and what motivates those within the City administration to enable and encourage these processes. Is it an education and research strategy for inclusion or is it a struggle for social justice and power redistribution? (See Manyozo: 156-157).

Clearly, there is a commitment among senior management that goes beyond the policies of the City, a deeper belief in participatory processes. For them, citizen participation is something that is absolutely necessary when developing the city. Almost identical to the key factors of the pragmatic, or *systems discourse* within community engagement approaches (Manyozo 2012:165-166), they see citizen participation as a strategy for building trust for public authorities, educating citizens on society and for local government and city administration to get much-needed help, since they alone are unable to solve all challenges of Malmö.

The Project Manager of Amiralsstaden believes the City needs to work participatory with citizens and other actors, if complex challenges are to be solved: “We don’t do it because we think it’s fun, or yes, it is fun, but there is also a hell of a lot of worrying, because you don’t have a clue, you just throw yourself off the cliff. But as I see it, it’s rather about that we have pushed our boundaries as far as we can internally in the organisation when it comes to solutions to societal challenges. And there are some challenges that we can’t solve, no matter how much we push it” (Project Manager)

The view on citizens as the real experts of life in different areas of Malmö come up in several interviews. The City Planning Director says that “it is the citizens who are the experts of a site. They live there every day and know exactly how it works, they know what networks exist, and we don’t see that. We need their help if we are to develop the city successfully” (City Planning Director).

Viewing citizens as experts is, in a way, contradicts Listerborn (2008:61-62), when she, in her study of participatory planning, questions why the planner would even want participation from
citizens when the planners themselves are experts. “There is also no evidence that people are interested in working for the public good or common interest, rather than for themselves”, she says (ibid).

But, contrary to this claim, the Participatory Process Designer of Amiralsstaden, says citizen participation is about remembering who you work for, whilst at the same time build trust for public authorities and teach citizens about society.

“A public institution or a government doesn’t exist because it knows what to do to the people in the bottom of the pyramid. It’s the opposite, the people exist in a society and therefore there are public authorities, a government, and a king. That’s why we exist…So, I think that having a participatory approach reminds you of that…And then, of course, it has to do with being efficient, to do what needs to be done, and not only keep yourself busy. And it has to do with democracy and transparency and for people to feel that they can engage because the authorities are closer, you know what happens in this house [City Hall], they know how it works and feel safer, have bigger trust.” (Participation Process Manager)

Although the systems discourse is more clearly occurring in the words of the informants, there is also another dimension to the motivation among the managing team, which has more to do with the empowerment approach (Manyozo 2012:165, 178), where factors such as citizens’ personal development, being heard and have their contributions implemented, are key. The City Planning Director highlights the more democratic aspects of participation: “One could say that there is some sort of democratic aspect in it as well, that you have to be able to trust that you are being heard and that you are able to influence” (City Planning Director).

The Project Manager of Amiralsstaden says citizen participation is a question of both learning how society functions and about rights and duties, as well as one of strengthening the individual: “I think, by making people participate in our city planning processes, they can be given responsibilities for certain parts of the process, that they haven’t had before. That way they get an understanding of how you plan a city, that it is not always obvious how you make priorities or choices, that it is complex… And that may strengthen the participating individual, who may contribute with his or her competence.” (Project Manager)

4.1.2 Citizens with concrete contributions
As opposed to the management and staff, the citizens don’t mention their expertise as citizens living in an area. For them, it is their formal knowledge and skills that matter. In this case, they all
have a wish to contribute to finding solutions to challenges like unemployment, discrimination and racism, and integration of newly arrived refugees and migrants.

The Employed Citizen, who has been living in Sweden for two years, says: “There are so many young people. They have university degrees. They sit and do nothing and receive social benefits. The first thing, if you want to develop the city or the country, you need to use these young people for working. For example, you can arrange contests and these people can apply and if they win they can get money or a job here, or I don’t know. That could develop the city.” (Participant Employee)

For Citizen Participant, who took part in the Communication for Citizen Participation project, participating is a way to help Swedish society change the way it handles integration of newcomers. She is full of ideas and sees Amiralssstaden as an arena to share them and find partners to realise the ideas: “They started to talk about that, how can we communicate. But much earlier than this, I had the idea that Swedish authorities need to act in a smart and calm way to integrate these people into the society better.” (Citizen Participant)

Much like the arguments from the City, citizens see their participation as empowering, as in the feeling of contributing and being part of the society and not just sitting at home with benefits. But they are also clear about that their contribution, in form of experience and formal knowledge, can help solve societal problems, and develop the city. There is no clear separation between systems and empowerment approach for the citizens either. Rather, it connects to Tufte’s (2017:13) claim that the central focus of participatory communication is on the empowerment of citizens through their active involvement in the identification of problems, the development of solution strategies and their implementation.

### 4.1.3 Summary: Participation Approach

The answers from the City informants show that they have a strong systems approach to community engagement with a focus on learning and consulting. At the same time, the empowerment approach is almost as strong, which shows there is no clear distinction, no “either or”, but “both”. The contribution to participatory process for city development differs depending if you are a City representative or a citizen. While citizens want to contribute with formal knowledge, concrete ideas and solutions to concrete problems or challenges, the City representatives view citizens as having expert knowledge just by living in a certain place.
4.2 Power

The question of how power is acknowledged and distributed within the participatory communication processes of city development is important if you want to understand what the process really leads to. As illustrated in Arnstein’s (1969) ladder of participation in chapter 2, the higher up the ladder you climb, the more decision-making power is shared. In the middle rungs the citizen can still be heard, but there are no guarantees that their views will be “heeded by the powerful” (ibid:217). In this section I will take a closer look on how the informants see power in relation to the participatory communication processes, and analyse how power is practiced or shared, consciously or not.

Manyozo (2012:222) argues that development communication is no longer a question of top-down or bottom-up approaches. When it comes to media and communication for development interventions, a key indicator for whether the intervention has mattered, should around a careful and systematic understanding of how power has been negotiated and contested in favour of people (ibid).

4.2.1 From sharing power and influence, to inspiration

When discussing power and the sharing of power and in what way citizens influence the decisions for city development within the city of Malmö, the informants give quite differing answers. The higher up in the hierarchy, the more you discuss power as an explicit factor in play, while the participating citizens do not bring up the concept of power in the same way.

On the highest level, the City Planning Director seem to agree with Manyozo, wanting to climb up Arnstein’s ladder and share power: “When you enter a participatory process, you must be prepared to refrain from power, or else it’s no use. It is an important and harsh component from time to time, but I think that’s the way it is. If you step into it and if you are serious about it, then you have to show that you can share your power.” (City Planning Director)

At the same time, he is well aware where the formal power lies in Sweden, a fact that “pushes him down the ladder”, towards consultation where no formal power is shared: “It may well be that there are laws and political committees and other things that make power end up in a certain place anyway. But to share power is also to share new visions… If you can influence the decision, even if the decision is taken in the ordinary power structure, the decision will be different if you had a well-designed participatory process, from if you didn’t. The sharing of power needs to be done during the journey. And I’m thinking that when we work the way we do and will do in Amiralsstaden, our decisions will be influenced all the time.” (City Planning Director)
This approach to power by the City Planning Director connects to Carpentier’s (2016:70-88) argument that the notion of power in processes is complex, and becomes “boxed in” when you try to measure it in ladder-based approaches.

However, when thinking ahead, the City Planning Director says there is a need to formalize citizen representation in the whole project of Amiralsstaden to secure influence: “As we move towards implementation, we must find a steadier form. It would be interesting to see if we could have a citizen representative in the forum of Amiralsstaden, or why not in the steering group? If you don’t dare to fully share the power, or if you say that legislation and committees make it impossible, then at least you can co-opt or give room for a voice, there are many alternatives for that” (City Planning Director)

Having a citizen on the board would mean climbing up the ladder again, from consultation to placation. The degree to which citizens are actually placated, however, depends on two factors: the quality of technical assistance they have in articulating their priorities and the extent to which the community has been organized to press for those priorities. (Arnstein 1969:221)

The closer to the citizen you get in the hierarchy of informants within the staff of Amiralsstaden, the more they use the word ‘inspiration’ and not ‘influence’ to describe what is going on in the participatory processes. The Project Manager underlines that being honest about what to expect is crucial: “As Amiralsstaden, we are not going out and promise that ‘we have a new process here where we will look at shared power, where half the power will lie with the people and half of the power within the city of Malmö’. Instead we must be quite honest with how certain projects are started, that there can’t always be transparency and openness, and that many things are already decided. And that there are situations where we cannot go out and pretend that people actually can have real influence” (Project Manager)

For the Participation Process Designer, power is not only about who gets to decide on different matters, it is something much bigger than that, and it touches upon what the City Planning Director called a change of mindset. She says: “For me personally, power has as much to do with how I act and what questions I ask. It’s not only about how other people’s sharing of power looks, but how I, in my daily working life use the power I have. That’s also important, I think.” (Participatory Process Designer)

The fact that Sweden has a relatively strong state apparatus with centralised and formalised systems of power, makes it hard for participatory processes to exercise ‘real’ influence, says the
Participatory Process Designer, who has long experience of working in countries where the state is weak, and the informal power structures are much stronger than the formal ones. She says that “influencing” in the Swedish context, in Amiralsstaden, is more a matter of inspiring. And the inspiring moment is a moment of communication: “The whole city developing process and power, in Sweden is very centralised. The power lies with the property owners and the authorities. It is very extreme that way…In the projects we have been working with abroad we have given mandate to the inhabitants and it’s very open what that mandate means…they have a certain degree of autonomy. In Amiralsstaden, the only way to practice some kind of influence is to inspire. And that’s why these meetings are so important, whether they are in the shape of a video production or around a table or whatever. Inspiration is anything from the people working in City Hall seeing or hearing one of these videos and it touches them and when they make a certain decision that day, it is a bit different than it would have been if they hadn’t seen the video. A communications officer may be inspired to use another word than the one she’s used to.”

(Participatory Process Designer)

Once again it is clear that power is far from only making the final decision. A moment of inspiration can mean influencing a change of behaviour, a change of thought, which in turn, according to the belief of the informants, can influence a decision. One can only begin to understand the difficulties of measuring this kind of impact, and how hard it must be to show visible, cost-effective results, as often demanded by financing partners (see Waisbord 2010:21-23, Tufte 2017:19).

4.2.2 Handing over resources and giving feedback

The Video for Active Listening project was managed by two citizens of Amiralsstaden, as informants called Citizen Video 1 and 2. They were paid by the Amiralsstaden project and given a budget for the production. The instructions were very open, there was no more steering from the Amiralsstaden project, than a wish to listen to citizens’ (critical) views on the development of the area, with a focus on the new train station in Rosengård. According to the Project Manager, they didn’t have a clue what it would become when they started: “We said videos, just do it, we want to take part of peoples’ stories and we believe that through hiring you, who have a network and contacts and with the background you have, you are able to build a bigger trust and hear stories that I wouldn’t if I was to go out with a camera and interview people, like a stranger. So, we didn’t really know what we would get, and we knew this beforehand. Rather, we wanted to learn from the process of doing it this way, how the videos were made and how we worked together. Then, once we got the videos we thought about how to use them”
Depending on how you view this communication intervention, you end up on different rungs of Arnstein’s ladder. Most importantly though, since participation is about the process, is to analyse it as a process. And as a process, this project is actually a case of *Citizen Control*, which is the top rung of the ladder. The City has handed over the power to the citizens, given them money and resources and an open-ended question to answer. *Citizen Control* guarantees that residents can govern the program or project, be in full charge of policy and managerial aspects, and be able to negotiate the conditions under which “outsiders” may change them (Arnstein 1969:223).

For Citizen Video 2, the fact that Amiralsstaden gave resources to the project, together with an open-ended mission with the only aim to hear citizen’s stories, was important. For her, it was handing over power: “It’s a nice way for the City of Malmö to act, that instead of just collecting the information like that, they give that resources to people to give them the information. Cause maybe what we want to say is different from what the City of Malmö initially thought they wanted to hear, and maybe that’s like reversing the power dynamic a little bit. It’s like getting the discursive power in a way, you got the power to talk and be listened to…You can feel it’s very different to know that you are being given resources and you are trusted with that. That’s kind of empowering for us. That kind of statement of how the local government uses its’ resources could be very meaningful to people” (Video Citizen 2)

Looking at the finished videos as a product instead, and how this product is published and used, it stays on the *consultation* rung, which is where you are inviting citizens’ opinions to inform your decision (Arnstein 1969:219). One of the receivers of the videos was Amiralsstaden’s Project Manager. She says: “We are going to continue working with them [the videos]. We don’t see it as finished just because the videos are finished…We are going to look at them and reflect over our own role in the stories. We did the same thing at my department…It was Omid’s video, his life situation where his family had to move to Copenhagen and he had to stay here only because they
didn’t find a big enough apartment. And we were reflecting on that, what are we doing in our department, on a concrete level in our action plans and analyses, and connect it to a real person with a real concern, what are we doing? And it was a very giving discussion, actually.” (Project Manager)

Video Citizen 2 who was involved in showing and discussing the videos at the Strategic Department, says she would be interested in what happens after that: “We did a little bit initially, in a meeting with very important people, where we presented the videos and talked to them about what we were doing and we got some feedback in the meeting then, that they appreciated being able to see the stories… I’d be interested to know the impact in six months’ time or like in a year’s time to see whether it reaches that far.” (Video Citizen 2)

So far, however, there is no documentation on whether the videos, as a product, have had a concrete or visible impact on decisions (or other choices) made by the City.

In the videos, five citizens of Amiralsstaden tell their stories, starting from their view on the new train station. The people interviewed in the videos weren’t expecting their stories to bring about a big change, says Video Citizen 1: “Of course, when we did the interviews they did not expect that things could change overnight, but they were still willing to share their ideas, because they think this is a positive thing, a positive move... They accepted that they weren’t going to get anything back” (Video Citizen 2)

Once again, impact is discussed. One citizen participant wants to know if and how the videos have made a difference, she would like to keep up the relationship with the City and expresses what Couldry (2010:146) calls a lack of reciprocity, as the City stopped feedbacking how the videos were used after the initial meeting. Other citizens are positive about participating without getting anything back, not expecting a change. Instead they feel empowered by participating in the videos. For them it is enough just to be asked and listened to.

4.2.3 Language as power

On Tuesdays at 4 pm the project management team of the Communication for Citizen Participation knowledge alliance have their weekly meeting. The team consists of two volunteers and Employed Citizen. The Participatory Process Designer from Amiralsstaden is also there. The two volunteers are studying and working as service designers, designing and organising co-creative processes. They are both native Swedish speakers. The Employed Citizen came to Sweden from Syria two and a half years ago. Today the team will plan for the one-on-one meetings between city planners and citizens, that will start in a few days. After talking for almost fifteen minutes about
where these meeting should take place (they want it to be on a neutral or equal ground in order not to intimidate the citizens), one of them asks Employed Citizen what he thinks. He has tried to speak several times, but it seems he hasn’t found the words quickly enough. He says that he’s quite convinced they all want to meet at City Hall because that would make them feel that they and their opinions are important. Everyone is quiet for a while. It seems no one else had had that thought.

The question of language came up in many interviews. As Couldry (2010:7-8) says, having a voice requires resources: both practical resources (language) and the status necessary if one is to be recognized by others as having a voice. And like most resources, they are unevenly distributed. The observation above is one example. Another is when the Participatory Process Designer reflects on language as an obstacle for equalizing power structures in a meeting: “What we have seen is that, in the meeting itself, often small and intimate meetings, it is more of a meeting between people. Power isn’t that outspoken, not until they leave the meeting. Because obviously it is the politician or the one who goes back to the computer who has more power afterwards, but not during the moment of involvement. Then it is really two persons, or more, meeting on an equal ground. The biggest obstacle to do that when they meet on this equal ground, is the language. It is very hard to stop those who speak very good Swedish from speaking on a certain level, or speed that not everyone can follow.” (Participatory Process Designer)

Language is in focus as well when it comes to understanding how to communicate with the people you would like to participate in the developing processes. Tufte’s (2017:174-175) conclusion about organisations’ focus on information and clear, finished messages, risk limiting interactivity and dialogic processes, is confirmed by the Project Manager of Amiralsstaden, who at the same time recognizes the need for clear messages when first reaching out to citizens: “If we don’t have a functioning communication we won’t get the participation. They are dependent on each other… And, this is only a guess, but do we, the City of Malmö, know what language citizens want to receive the information on, or how it should be formulated? ...It is easy to sit here and believe that if only we’re doing a good job on our web page, our communication has been a success.” (Project Manager)

As illustrated above, management informants show a deep understanding for the importance of information and clear messages in order to have a well-functioning participatory process. Especially when there is an unequal distribution of voice, in this case language skills. Clearly, the two paradigms of communication for development, information dissemination and participatory
communication (Waisbord 2010, Manyozo 2012, Tufte 2017), are overlapping and mutually dependant.

### 4.2.4 Summary: Power

While the vision from the top of the hierarchy within the City is to share power, there is also an awareness that decisions are made in existing, formal power structures. The aim, therefore, is to find a way for participants to, through ongoing participatory processes, influence the decision before it is taken. The closer to citizens in the formal hierarchy though, the less you believe that the participatory processes really are about sharing power. Instead it’s described as *inspiring* decision-makers to self-reflexivity, for example to be aware of the privilege of speaking fluent Swedish when you’re in a dialogue with someone who doesn’t and to inspire City representatives to make small (or big) changes in everyday-decisions, such as use of certain words or perspectives. Clearly, power-sharing comes with handing over resources to participants and with an openness to expected outcome and the Video for Active Listening project is an example of a *Citizen Control* process. Finally, it is obvious that clear information and messages are needed as a starting point for effective participatory processes, which blurs the dichotomy between information dissemination and participatory approaches in the field of Communication for Development.

### 4.3 Representation and voice

When the intention of participation and power-sharing is governance and a deeper democracy (see i.e. Commission for a Socially Sustainable Malmö 2013, Manyozo 2012, Tufte 2017), one must also be aware of whose voices are heard. Do these voices represent the citizens of Malmö (or Amiralsstaden) in a fair way? Are the voices of otherwise marginalized groups represented?

#### 4.3.1 Imbalance of voices

Tufte (2017:167) argues that in the light of the growing gap between authorities and their constituencies, there is a crisis of representation of the ordinary citizen, and the marginalized citizen in particular. “It manifests itself as a communicative disconnect and imbalance between the voices, aspirations and hopes of groups of citizens that feel marginalized and unrepresented, on the one side, and the de facto communicative interventions of governments, agencies and civil society, on the other.” (ibid)

In a similar manner, within the communicative planning, there is a growing post-colonial and feminist critique addressing that not all voices are being heard. The wider the social and cultural gap between the citizens and the planners, the greater the difficulty of communicating. While
some groups are regarded as difficult to get in contact with and not interested in speaking with the planners, the planners need citizen involvement to fulfil the duty of democracy. (Listerborn 2008:61-65).

Within the organisation of Amiralsstaden, representation is discussed and reflected upon, but there is no system in place to secure representation in the participatory processes. The management is aware of what Tufte (2017) and Listerborn (2008) call the gap between authorities and citizens and the management’s ambition is to reach the marginalized citizens. Including the voices of non-privileged groups is not just about fair representation, according to the management, but also about making sure to hear their stories: “We would like, in the best of worlds, to reach those we call ’the invisible stakeholders’, those who are not organised or who aren’t among the most seen or heard, but whose stories, or whose participation we need to get on the right track, to understand how we solve the trickiest societal challenges.” (Project Manager)

This approach to representation refers to the systems approach to participatory communication where “the inability of government to solve all challenges” is one important reason for participatory processes (Manyozo 2012:166-167).

One marginalized group in society whose voices aren’t heard, is, according to Spivak (1996: 289), subordinate women, who “cannot speak, since that which constitutes the position of the subordinate is precisely the impossibility of being heard”. In her interviews with city planners in Malmö, Listerborn (2008:64), says it is not only enough to be willing to listen to the voices of marginalised women—planners need to ‘find them’ in the first place, which, for some, seem to be the difficult part. For the Participatory Process Designer in Amiralsstaden, finding women to join the processes hasn’t been a problem: “[name of Communications Officer] mentioned that when it comes to these things, women often don’t show up. But we have a lot of contact with women, and women who can represent many others, they can represent their children and their parents. Looking at it that way, one can say we have succeeded without having thought about it that much” (Participatory Process Designer)

The question of who is involved and who joins the different participatory processes in Amiralsstaden doesn’t seem to have a clear answer. Both the Project Manager and the Participatory Process Designer underline that this is the beginning of a long process, that they’re “building the bridge as they walk it” and that right now, it’s about building lasting relationships with individuals, networks, and organisations.
My interpretation is that fair and systematic representation isn’t a priority at this stage and that the team instead is reaching for the ones who are closest to them. However, there is representation from marginalized groups in the participatory processes, such as newly arrived refugees and migrants, and among them, women. And it is not a coincidence. Employed Citizen is a newcomer to Sweden, as are both Participatory Process Designers: “The fact that we have our workplace there [in the Amiralsstaden Meeting Place] is important, we’re not just there for specific meetings. And I think it matters that we don’t speak perfect Swedish too, no one needs to feel intimidated when talking to us”, says Participatory Process Designer.

The choice of Participation Facilitator (or designer) is crucial in this regard. The fact that groups within the public sphere, who are normally “invisible”, are active in the processes of Amiralsstaden, has to do with trust in the participation facilitators who, as underlined by Basette (2004:10) can understand the indigenous knowledge systems and praxis and help them express their views. Participation from newly arrived also has to do with that they have the time and see it as an opportunity to build networks and be included in society, whereas representation from citizens who have been in Sweden for a long time is low: “We find it very easy to work with the ones who are pretty newly arrived, but we don’t have that much contact with those who have been here longer…Right now, we are building networks on many various levels. We have started with individuals, and among those, many women, newly arrived, and larger civil society organisations. Everything in between will come eventually” (Participatory Process Designer).

The Participatory Process Designer emphasises the building of personal relationships, instead of conducting surveys or have general meetings a couple of times a year: “These personal relationships are very important…to get to know some citizens and some people within the city administration, and to really invest in that for a longer period of time. That is when a bigger change can come, more than if you have two general meetings a year” (Participatory Process Designer). This connects to Couldry (2010:2) when he says that valuing voice involves particular attention to the conditions under which voice as a process is effective, and how broader forms of organization may subtly undermine or devalue voice as a process. But I also think there might be a risk of losing sight of representation with this kind of reasoning, combined with the non-strategy as to who is invited to participate. Since both Participatory Process Designers are newcomers to Sweden themselves, there may be a risk that they bond with the community of newcomers in Amiralsstaden, and not as much with the communities who have lived there for a long time, whose voices and experiences may add new or different perspectives to the
development of the area. Among them there most certainly are other non-privileged groups, whose voices are seldom heard.

4.3.2 Voice and storytelling

The video project for active listening is one example of how everyday life stories of citizens are used as a basis to understand the complexity of a problem and to discuss what to do about it. In this case, voice, as in “the capacity of human beings to give an account of themselves and of their place in the world” (Couldry 2010:1) is highly valued.

In feminist theory, it is emphasised not to separate the self and the object of research. Empathy and emotions become part of the dialogue. Methods based on oral traditions and listening is given higher priority than in traditional planning. “The questions of language and communication are central and often acts as a borderline between power and inclusion” (Listerborn 2008). To move away from professional planning language, feminist planners have used methods of storytelling and anecdotes as an alternative, to understand the needs of citizens and to empower those whose voices are seldom heard. Sandercock and Forsyth (1992:51) give an example where a planner let people sit in small groups and tell stories instead of having a big meeting: “People then had no trouble speaking about their lives and community. Previously silent or hesitant participants found that they too possessed knowledge.”

In the Video for Active Listening project in Amiralsstaden, storytelling is in focus. The management informants confirm feminist planner theory’s call for storytelling as a method to understand complex needs and desires: “A story about a human being’s life also says something about what that person needs from society. It may be hard for an individual, and even for me, to define what I need to feel good. Sometimes it can be really easy to define, that I need a job, or I need this or that, but there can also be underlying causes, in structures, that affect this individual a lot. And that is what we need to understand about why there are obstacles for this person to get from one life situation to another. And I think that it is easier for people to talk about their lives…than to demand that he or she concretise what he or she believes needs to change in society. In this short amount of time, I have heard stories that have been very important to me, that I hadn’t heard if I had asked, because I would have posed the wrong questions and wouldn’t have gotten the answers I got when they get the opportunity to tell me their stories themselves.”

(Project Manager)
4.3.3 Summary Representation and Voice
Amiralsstaden succeeds to include voices of marginalized groups, such as women and newly arrived. They do reflect on it, but there is no real plan for how to get fair representation. Instead, the focus lies on learning and development of methods. Voice as the capacity to tell one’s life story is well captured in the Video project. By looking at and listening to the videos, the power of storytelling is strategically used by the City as a chance to go beyond a certain predefined problem and see more complex structural issues.

4.4 Outcome and impact
When analysing motivation and practice of participation in Amiralsstaden through perspectives like power, voice, and representation, one question that keeps coming up is what the participatory processes lead to, what difference they make. As Couldry (2010:146) puts it: “The issue is what governments do with voice, once expressed: are they prepared to change the way they make policy? Governments so far are a long way off acknowledging this.”

Couldry (ibid) says government attempts to ‘listen’ to citizens often fail doubly because there is no actual exchange of narratives (no initial reciprocity), and because actions taken by government do not subsequently register the fact that listening has taken place (a second lack of reciprocity).

From Listerborn’s (2008:65) study of participatory planning in Malmö, we learn that it is often understood from the critical planning discourse that people want to engage, while no planner listens to them, and that people have tried to influence the planning agenda with no results.

Participatory communication processes within Communication for Development have gotten critique for being slow and unmeasurable (Waisbord 2010). How do we know if participatory communication interventions make a difference, and how do we communicate the difference once it’s made, to avoid that second lack of reciprocity?

Tufte (2017:19-20, 144) problematises the fact that most communication models, whether they lean towards diffusion or participation, tend to contain “an implicit imperative of having predefined goals”. That is, they have established a set of tangible targets, often quantifiable outcomes related to ambitions of information transfer. More open-ended processes of social change that are implicit in notions of empowerment, citizen engagement, and social change, are left aside. At best, Tufte says, institutionalized communication for development practice, have a category of ‘unintended outcomes’ that could well be sparked or reinforced by the particular strategic communication intervention, as “the parking lot for the change processes that were not made explicit in the design and in the established indicators of the planned evaluation.” (ibid)
The act of listening is demanding and the informants from the City describe their way of working with expressions like “explorative”, “building the bridge as we walk it”, “not knowing what the end result will be”. Learning is seen as one of the most important outcomes. Getting inspired, more than influenced, by citizens is one way of learning and it connects to what the City Planning Director talks about when he says the City needs to learn “new ways of working and thinking”. As I understand it from talking to the informants, reading documents and observing situations, this explorative way of working also contributes to a constant evaluation of the processes, for example through the Learning Lunches. Predefined goals are not necessarily a mandatory part of this exploring strategy.

The video project, for example, as described above, didn’t have any predefined goals. But for Video Citizen 1 and 2 it is clear what the video project meant to them in terms of empowerment, one of these more intangible outcome that Tufte (2017:19-20) describes. Video Citizen 1, who never worked in Sweden before, says: “Personally, I feel like it was quite successful. I feel wow, cause I used to think that I have to speak good Swedish and be able to get to know the city better, but then I feel like oh, I found out that actually quite a lot of people don’t really speak Swedish but they’re still very chill, connected to each other. It lowered the barrier for me and I know I shouldn’t just lock myself in my thoughts. Instead I see more opportunities” (Video Citizen 1)

“Speaking of empowerment”, says Video Citizen 2, “I think it’s him [Omid, participant in the first video] being seen, and his efforts, his attitude and success. People could see him and hear him. It’s a success being seen and I think that’s something that’s really difficult when you’re in a new country.” (Video Citizen 2). Another way of expressing empowerment is to be acknowledged as a citizen. Employed Citizen, with a large network of newcomers, especially from Syria, says, regarding letting them participate in city development: “It’s good because they will feel that they are interesting. Before, they don’t feel that they are interesting, they feel that this country is only for Swedes, not for other nationalities.” (Employed Citizen)

Connected to the concept of empowerment there is the challenge Indian anthropologist, Arjun Appadurai (2013:213), has termed ‘the capacity to aspire’, a capacity that is unequally distributed among wealthier and poorer communities, that allows people to make their way from more proximate, measurable and material needs to more distant aspirational worlds of hopes and visions for the future. Participating Citizen, who came to Sweden from Syria 4,5 years ago participated in the Communication for Citizen Participation project. She says it is only very
recently that she regained this capacity to aspire, after being unemployed and dependent on social benefits for more than four years. She felt she couldn’t answer the question about what it meant to participate, to her: “It is hard to say, because it was only recently, to be honest, that I have started to have hope that, yes, we are included in this country and that there are many institutions that can include us newcomers in this country. And then we will be able to feel that we are contributing to the country and that we are responsible also for it. But it was only recently, after I started working.” (Participating Citizen)

When asked how you measure participation, the City Planning Director, stops to think for a while. “That’s a good question, actually”, he says, “I can see that it has been important in other parts of the city, when we have had discussions with groups of citizens, absolutely, it has had an influence. I’m thinking that when we work the way we do, and will do, in Amiralsstaden, our decisions will be influenced all the time, they have to” (City Planning Director).

But there is a worry that the project and its’ outcome isn’t strong enough, that citizens’ influence isn’t big enough. The Participatory Process Designer says that “no matter how much I believe that this is the right thing to do, I also feel that you have to work actively with how you get some sort of real influence as well… Sometimes it feels like everyone thinks that what we do is so interesting, and sure, it gives us a buzz, that we can actually contribute with something here in Sweden. But we don’t want to become that kind of project that is used in conferences as an example, or that we become some sort of show.” (Participatory Process Designer)

The fact that the video project, as a process, really was a case of Citizen Control, hasn’t changed the management’s view that real influence on decisions has been small, and the matters that have been discussed have been more or less uncontroversial. “It’s not that we pretend that anyone is influencing anything until we know that they can have real influence”, says Participatory Process Designer.

Couldry’s (2010:146) question remains. Are governments prepared to change the way they make policy? Is the City of Malmö prepared to deal with other, more complex and difficult issues using citizen participation? Choosing what questions or issues the participatory processes should be about is also an act of power. Video Citizen 1 says that having the new train station as a focus point for the conversation in the videos wasn’t working out: “We were like, a train station, okay, what are people expected to say? They will say yeah, cool. So, we needed to find something else to talk about. Then people could bring up other topics. The train station just become the conversation starter.” (Video Citizen 1). Video Citizen 2 agrees and says there’s a potential for a
more combative topic and mentions a factory that came up in one of the interviews: “That would be more of a test of how much the City of Malmö is willing to share some power. To really challenge itself on some things, like the idea that citizens were protesting the factory because they think it creates pollution. And what would happen if the City of Malmö didn’t get involved in that or they said that we don’t have the power, we want to keep it or whatever, that might have brought together some more interesting discussions. The train station in Rosengård is just popular, please just open it.” (Video Citizen 2)

The participatory process that actually gave citizens’ complete control, the video project, revolved around an event that everyone thought was very positive, the opening of a train station. However, the City was open to opinions and critique. Neither the informants nor I have mentioned conflict of interests in the interviews, which is interesting, since it surely must be an inevitable feature when working participatory with representation from different actors in society. Carpentier (2016:70-88) recognizes that there is a struggle over participatory intensities within these processes. “Different actors might have different perspectives and interests, and will develop different strategies to see their perspectives realised, entering into conflict with each other.” Some of the informants touches on the subject and mentions that they’re worried that there is a fear of discussing or debating with citizens, within the organisation, which they would like to challenge. The video project was a first step. Imagine the kind of strategic discussions citizens’ stories on more difficult topics could spark.

4.4.1 Summary: Outcome

One of the most valued outcome from the City’s perspective, is the contribution to a learning organisation. The explorative way of working gives room for constant evaluation and improvement. The fact that the City invested time and resources into projects with no predefined goals contributed to citizens feeling empowered, one of those more intangible outcome. This kind of trust invested in citizens contributed in turn to a mutual growing trust from the citizens towards the City. However, there is an observable need from participants (in different roles) to see impact at some level and there is room for a more systematic feedback loop, as well as communicative activities to make participatory processes and their contributions to city development well-known.
5. Conclusions and discussion

As a relatively new project, Amiralsstaden sets out to create and test new ways of working with physical planning and to create new models for participation (reflecting paper). The overall aim is to contribute to social sustainability. Here are some concluding thoughts.

Pragmatic motives and empowering processes

When it comes to the motives for citizen participation in development processes, there is a difference of ambition, depending on where within the social and bureaucratic hierarchy the informant is. The higher up, the higher the ambitions of power-sharing. The closer to the residents you are, the more “realistic” you get. The one closest to the citizens is the Participatory Process Designer. She says the processes are rather about inspiration than power-sharing or influencing decisions.

The management generally sees citizen participation first and foremost as a necessary component to be able to make informed decisions. The citizens have local and much-needed knowledge which the planners don’t have since they don’t live in the area. On a broader scale, the management looks at citizen participation as a way to educate citizens about society in large and to empower individuals. Thus, they tend to have a pragmatic (or systems) approach to community engagement (Manyozo 2012:156-157, 165-). At the same time, the empowerment approach is present in all interviews. The way of working, the methods used in the process of involvement all aim at and lead to, empowerment and personal development. And, as we know by now, the process is the focus of the participatory communication approach.

For the participating citizens, the motive for joining is much more concrete. They want to contribute with their formal knowledge and professional expertise, with the common goal of a more inclusive city. They have ideas for solutions to challenges and issues like segregation and discrimination and they see the processes as a forum where they can share their ideas and exercise their profession, which would be a way to feel included and counted in society.

Non-strategy of representation risks legitimacy

But who gets this opportunity to be empowered or included? Regarding representation and voice, Amiralsstaden has managed to attract otherwise marginalised, or subordinate groups such as newly arrived refugees and migrants, and among them, women. Most communication for development scholars (see i.e. Manyozo 2012, Tufte 2017, Arnstein 1969) underlines that for participatory communication for social change to be “valid” the voices of the marginalized people must be heard. Amiralsstaden has set out to capture the voices of the “invisible”, and has,
thanks to the choice of staff and a local presence, succeeded. But they have no strategy to get fair representation. Such a strategy would probably be useful if they are to bridge the growing gap between the government and its’ constituencies (Gaventa 2002:29) and be able to legitimize the results and outcome from the participatory processes better. Without it, it is hard to answer yes to the question of whether the participation processes of Amiralsstaden “deepen democracy”.

Citizen control process – consultative product
As to the question whether the participatory communication processes of Amiralsstaden live up to the three fundamentals of participation; minimal or total liberation from oppressive power relations; access to decision-making processes; and communicative relationships (Manyozo 2012: 157), the answer is yes. Both projects under study have had access to decision-making processes, in terms of the outcome being discussed in management forums, and decision-makers (city planners) participating in the process themselves. However, the participatory communication processes explored in this thesis haven’t been about directly influencing political decisions. They have been about influencing ongoing development processes (which in the end, of course, could lead up to a decision) and inspiring city officials. As far as possible, the design of the processes has worked to eliminate oppressive power relations, aiming for the participants to meet on “equal ground”. Finally, there has been continuous communication between the participants and the City throughout the process.

In the case of the Videos for Active Listening, Amiralsstaden gave resources in form of salary and a budget to two citizens, who got the mission to “question the City of Malmö” with a focus on the new local train station and with video as a medium. To dare to hand over money without more expectations but to hear the voices of citizens, is to hand over power. Doing it that way also lowers the risk of mere activation of citizens, which connotates notions of self-governing and self-supporting citizens as solutions to societal issues (see i.e. Dahlstedt 2006).

And even though the scale of Arnstein isn’t fully appropriate in capturing the dynamics of participation processes (see Carpentier 2016), it is still useful as an illustration of how power has been negotiated in a participatory process. As a process, the video project made it to the top rung of Arnstein’s (1969) ladder, Citizen Control, whereas as a product (the videos), it served as Consultation.

What lacked in the video project was a plan from Amiralsstaden for how to deal with the views and stories that were told. That’s where the power-sharing ended and the inspiration began.
Without a plan, there is a risk that the stories end up on the web or as the departure-point for strategic discussions a couple of times, and not used to their full potential.

**Learning organisation**

Results are hard to evaluate, but the “inspiring” of powerholders, as described by the City informants, could be viewed as part of the “new way of working and thinking” that the management is striving towards. It is about understanding the new, globalised city, its’ new citizens, their knowledge, and potential. It is about looking at yourself and your position as a planner (or City Official), being self-reflexive and to dare challenge your own expertise and usual way of doing or saying things, including being language-sensitive and taking a few steps back.

There is a kind of self-reflexivity built-in as a strategy in the Amiralstaden project, even if the result isn’t necessary power-sharing or influencing political decisions directly. The overall method is to test and try, evaluate and learn, much like what Basette (2004) says about participatory communication at the community level, that it “becomes a continuous cycle of action and reflection in drawing conclusions, applying them in practice and then questioning them again”.

When working with the thesis, it has also hit me that this way of designing the process is also closely related to the Ethnographic Action Research Approach and learning-based evaluation, (Tacchi, Slater and Hearn 2003, Lennie and Tacchi 2013), described in chapter 3.2. These methods are used not only to evaluate the results of a Communication for Development initiative but also to build a culture of learning.

Maybe this method of working is the most important outcome of the project, and an answer to the City Planning Director’s call for a new way of working and thinking, when he says that: “even if the decision is taken in the ordinary power structure, the decision will be different if you had a well-designed participatory process, from if you didn’t. The sharing of power needs to be done during the journey.” The challenge is to show how it’s done, which opens for an interesting door for further research.

**To open for the uncomfortable**

If a local government or city administration starts involving citizens more in communication processes, it must be brave enough to do it in all types of questions that matter to the citizens, not only positive and uncontroversial ones. It would be interesting to see what would happen if Amiralstaden, as a kind of testbed for innovative ways of participation, would to bring up a more controversial topic, like the supposedly polluting factory. If the City is serious about participation and wants their decisions to be informed by knowledge from more than the formal
experts, that must also go for the more difficult, complex decisions. But if a decision is already made, or if there is no room for influence, participatory processes would be pure manipulation (see Arnstein 1969), something which the management of Amiralsstaden is well aware of. In that case, the kind of ongoing dialogue that the City Planning Director is looking for would rather be a forum for explaining (or defending) the decision, not participation.

5.1 Summary: Conclusions and discussion
For the City of Malmö, the matter of citizen participation in development processes is a question of consultation for better decisions, as well as an important tool for empowering individuals. There are no clear boundaries between the two approaches. The same goes for the presumed dichotomy between communication as information dissemination and as participatory processes. Both are needed for effective participatory development processes.

The two participatory processes under study haven’t been about directly influencing political decisions. Instead, they have had two different aims, one has been about influencing and inspiring decision-makers and the other to explore new ways and methods of working with participation.

A very interesting example of an innovative participatory communication intervention, well worth developing, is the Video for Active Listening project. It comes across as an example of an explorative Communication for Development and Social Change project without predefined objectives that demand a cause-effect relationship between communication intervention and result although there is still an observable need from participants to see an impact at some level. Acknowledging, using and paying for citizens’ formal knowledge have been key factors for power sharing within the video project, as well as letting citizens’ voices create the content. Mutual trust has been built, citizens have been empowered. As a process, it ends up on the top rung of Arnstein’s (1969) famous ladder of citizen participation. However, as a product, it is still very difficult to measure if and how the videos have had an impact on city development processes. In reality, the outcome (or product) of an inclusive, power-sharing process, could (worst case) end up in a city official’s drawer, which would mean half (or more) of the potential of participation would be lost.

The study shows that city development processes in Amiralsstaden may have been influenced, city planners have been inspired and citizens have felt empowered by the participatory processes in Amiralsstaden. However, one of the most important outcomes is the creation of a culture of constant evaluation and improvement, the contribution to a learning organisation (see Bassett 2004,
Lennie and Tacchi 2013) and the establishment of structures and processes that makes it possible for this to continue. Communication is at the heart of most (if not all) levels of community engagement, and while the City Planning Office in Malmö is taking steps towards integrating a unit for dialogue and participation in their existing organisation, the rest of the organisation isn’t moving in that direction, yet.

It is through these participatory learning processes with constant evaluation and feedback as key ingredients, that we learn if voice has been valued, if power, in one way or the other has been negotiated, if decisions have been influenced, if the organisation has changed or evolved. Simply put, if participation has mattered. And it is through acts of communication that we show it. In other words, in addition to the need for communication professionals while planning and practicing participation, the learning organisation also must learn to communicate what they are learning and how they do it, especially when it comes to participatory processes where impact is hard to measure.
References


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